

NEWTOWN & LLANIDLOES
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT
OF
MEDICAL OFFICER
FOR 1925.



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Report of Medical Officer

FOR 1925.

*To the Chairman and Members of the Newtown and
Llanidloes Rural District Council.*

GENTLEMEN,—

I beg to present the Annual Report for 1925.

The Rural District of Newtown and Llanidloes comprises an area of 168,237 acres with an estimated population of 11,490. The district comprises practically the whole watershed of the Severn and its tributaries, extending from its source amongst the Plynlimon Ranges as far as about four miles below Newtown, and the watershed of the Wye and its tributaries for about ten miles of its course, where it leaves the County of Montgomery on the Radnorshire border. The character of the district is that of upland parishes with their extensive mountain lands and open hills forming the great sheep-walks of Montgomeryshire. These parts of the district are very sparsely inhabited, the houses consisting mostly of shepherds' cottages and small hill farms. The remainder of the district comprises extensive agricultural areas forming the parishes watered by the Severn, Wye and their tributaries. For purposes of classification the district is divided into four sections known respectively as Llanidloes (outer), Llanwnnog, Tregynon and Kerry. Llanidloes sub-district includes the parishes of Llangurig, Llanidloes (without) and Trefeglwys. Llanwnnog district includes Carno, Llanwnnog, Llandinam, Aberhafesp and Penstrowed. Tregynon district comprises the

parishes of Manafon, Tregynon, Llanwyddelan, Llanllugan and Bettws. Kerry includes the parishes of Kerry and Mochdre, the former comprising the three well defined districts of Kerry, Sarn and Dolfor. These districts correspond to the registration sub-districts.

The whole district takes up the south-eastern corner of the County of Montgomery and joins North Cardiganshire on its Llangurig border. Radnorshire forms part of its eastern boundary. The whole district is essentially pastoral and agricultural. The valleys are more thickly populated, the inhabitants being farmers, farm labourers, and those dependent upon agricultural industries. A short time ago there was a fairly large lead mining centre at the Van Mines, with a hamlet inhabited by the miners and their families. The mine has been closed down for the last seven years. The area around Llanidloes is rich in lead and other allied ores, and forty years ago it is reputed that over 1,000 miners worked in this locality, and there is evidence of this in the numerous ruins of mines in this neighbourhood.

In addition to the numerous smaller hamlets scattered over the area, the district contains the villages of Llangurig, Llandinam, Trefeglwys, Kerry, Carno, Caersws, Tregynon and Bettws. The climatic conditions, owing to its altitude, are favourable to an abundant rainfall. As a result of numerous observations conducted over a number of years, it has been ascertained that the rainfall in this area is from 60—80 inches annually. This is considerably in excess of the average for the whole of Wales. The prevailing wind is the west wind. This comes moisture-laden from over the Atlantic Ocean. As it sweeps upward over the highland watershed region, it is cooled and its moisture becoming condensed, causes the excessive rainfall.

The number of inhabited houses in 1921 was 2,422 with practically the same number of families or separate occupiers, with a negligible number only, where more than one family are in joint occupation.

The rateable value is £91,406, and assessable value £60,876. The sum represented by a penny rate on assessable value is £254.

The amount of Poor Law relief in this rural district for the year ended 31st March, 1926, was £3,275 15s 8d.

The population at census 1921 was 11,299.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Births—Legitimate, Males	...	...	...	117
„ Females	...	...	...	82
				<hr/>
				199
Illegitimate, Males	...	...	...	7
„ Females	...	...	...	7
				<hr/>
Total	...			213

As against 215 (1924) and 234 (1923).

Birth Rate—18.53 (1925)

18.87 (1924)

20.7 (1923)

Birth Rate, England and Wales, 1925 ... 18.3.

Deaths—Males ... 71

Females ... 82

Total ... 153

The crude death rate in this area was 13.3, and corrected death rate 10.42, as against a crude death rate of 13.5 (1924) and 13.18 (1923). The death rate for England and Wales in 1925 was 12.2.

There was no case of death from Puerperal Sepsis, or from other accidents and diseases of pregnancy.

Death from infants under one year of age, 21—16 males and 5 females.

Death rate, 98.6 per 1,000 births, as against an infantile mortality rate for England and Wales of 75.

Chief Causes of Death.

Measles 1, Whooping Cough 1, Influenza 6, Pulmonary Tuberculosis 5, Cancer 11, Rheumatic Fever 1, Diabetes 1, Cerebral Hæmorrhage 20, Heart Disease 32, Arterio Sclerosis 4, Bronchitis 10, Penumonia 10, Other Respiratory Diseases 1, Accidents and Deaths by Violence, etc. 7, Congenital Debility and Malformation, Premature Birth, etc. 12.

More than one-third of the total deaths were due to diseases of the heart and blood vessels, whilst lung diseases accounted for one-seventh of the deaths.

Ages at Death.

	Years.	Males.	Females.
Age Period—	0—1	16	5
	1—5	—	2
	5—15	2	1
	15—25	3	2
	25—35	2	1
	35—45	6	6
	45—55	4	9
	55—65	14	1
	65—75	11	21
	75—85	16	23
	Over 85	—	6

It may be interesting to note that part of the rural area, namely, that portion around Llanidloes is a goitrous neighbourhood. A large proportion of the inhabitants in the parish of Llanidloes (without) suffer from goitre. Of late, many authorities hold that there is an intimate relationship between Goitre and Rheumatism, whilst others deny that any such relationship exists. During the next few months I intend making a careful examination of the water supplies in this area. So as to get as much data as possible as to its condition in the areas where Goitre is particularly prevalent. Much has been written regarding dental defects

in young children and young adults at the present time and the evils that these defects lead to. In the Llanidloes area it is common to meet with children of three or four years old with a mouthful of septic teeth. Obviously this is due to a constitutional condition or disease and not to lack of cleanliness. The probability, nay, the almost certain cause, is deficiency of thyroid secretion. This is partly inherited and partly acquired. The parents suffer from Goitre and the children inherit from their parents, and the condition becomes worse by further imbibing infected water supplies. All these water supplies should be carefully examined as to their chemical and bacteriological impurities. When this condition is remedied, I am confident there will be great gain in health in this area.

Infectious Diseases.—The following notifications were recorded during the year 1925 :—Pneumonia 12, Scarlet Fever 46, Diphtheria 5, Erysipelas 4. In July, 1925, Scarlet Fever occurred in Llangurig district, from there it spread to Trefeglwys and thence to Caersws and Clatter district. The bulk of the cases were in Llanwnnog parish. The epidemic was at its height in October and November and by the end of December no fresh cases were notified. In one case I advised removal to the Shrewsbury Isolation Hospital, as it was impossible to have the child properly isolated at home. The family consisted of father, mother and six children, and the house only had two bedrooms (three beds).

The Sanitary Inspector and I visited the homes of all these cases, and made full enquiries with a view to ascertaining the cause of the outbreak, and full instructions were given to prevent the spread of infection.

In cases where any form of isolation is impossible, arrangements can be made with the County M.O.H., whereby the patients can be moved to either an isolation hospital at Shrewsbury or Oswestry. There is no isolation hospital in the county. There was no death from Scarlet Fever or Diphtheria.

TUBERCULOSIS.

Age Period of Notified Cases.

Years.	Males.	Females.
5—10	1	1
10—15	—	1
15—25	3	7
25—35	2	3
35—45	2	—
45—55	1	—
55—65	—	1
Over 65	—	1

There were 23 cases of Tuberculosis notified—20 Pulmonary and three Non-pulmonary. All these cases were seen by the County Tuberculosis Physician, who advises as to treatment. Some are sent to Machynlleth Tuberculosis Hospital for observation and some to one or other of the National Memorial Sanatoria. A few cases refuse to leave their homes, and are thus a cause of further spreading the disease.

Surgical and After-Care Clinics for Tuberculosis.

Every alternate month one of the Medical Officers of the Surgical Block, Llangwyfan Sanatorium, accompanied by Dr. Owen Morris, holds a Clinic for the diagnosis of fresh cases and for keeping under observation the surgical patients who are now at home after a course of residential treatment. Some are in plaster and many are in splints of various kinds, but at the clinics splints are adjusted, and for those who require it re-admission to the Surgical Block is arranged. Without these Clinics much of the good work done in the Surgical Hospitals of the Association will prove to be futile. And the fact that the patients so willingly attend, even though they have come long distances, is ample proof that the Clinics are appreciated by those concerned. All tubercular cripples can thus obtain treatment and after-care from the local Tuberculosis Dispensary without raising the question of expense or time.

It is highly desirable that similar arrangements should be come to by the County Council in the case of all other cripples, both as regards their treatment and after-care, and it is interesting to know that some counties in Wales have made such arrangements with the Shropshire Orthopaedic Hospital at Park Hall, Oswestry.

The Welsh National Memorial Clinics, which are attended by the people of the Rural District of Newtown and Llanidloes, are held at Newtown, and notice is sent out by Dr. Owen Morris to doctors and patients before the date the Clinic is held.

In addition to residential treatment, suspicious and actual cases of Tuberculosis are seen by the Tuberculosis Physician at his Clinics at Llanidloes and Newtown, and visits are paid to their homes both by the Tuberculosis Physician and the Tuberculosis Sister.

Patients from Newtown and Llanidloes Rural District admitted to the Hospital and Sanatoria of the Welsh National Memorial during 1925.

	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
In residence, Jan. 1, 1925	0	1	1	2
Admitted during 1925 ...	3	10	3	16
Discharged during 1925	3	6	2	11
In residence, Jan. 1, 1926	0	5	2	7

Of those discharged, 1 died, 5 no active signs, 1 fit for work, 1 stationary, 1 much improved, 2 improved.

Those discharged, between them had a total of 105 weeks of treatment in the Institutions of the Association. In addition a considerable number of cases were examined and diagnosed at the Newtown and Llanidloes Clinics and tuberculosis patients are encouraged to keep in touch with the Tuberculosis Physician until they are regarded safe. Suspicious members of the patient's household are also examined as contacts. The Area Sister who works with Dr. Owen Morris has paid a large number of visits to patients' homes and the District Nurses co-operate under the Memorial Scheme, which contributes £5 per annum to each Nursing Association.

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE AREA.

There are two hospitals, one in the urban district of Newtown and one in Llanidloes Borough. Both hospitals have admitted maternity cases, but it is not their practice to do so, and neither have maternity wards. Newtown Infirmary has 45 beds, and Llanidloes Hospital has 5 beds and 2 cots.

There is no hospital for infectious diseases in this area except an isolation hospital at Mochdre, near Newtown, available for smallpox cases.

The only institutional provision for unmarried mothers, illegitimate infants and homeless children in this area is the Union Workhouse at Caersws.

Ambulance facilities for infectious cases do not exist apart from that provided by isolation hospitals outside the County. If a case is removed to either the Shrewsbury or Oswestry isolation hospitals, an ambulance is sent from the hospital to fetch the patient.

Ambulance facilities for non-infectious and accident cases are provided at Newtown and Llanidloes. These have proved a great boon to the neighbourhood.

The Public Health Staff of your Council consists of the Medical Officer (part time) and the Sanitary Inspector. The latter is a whole time officer. Contribution is made under the Public Health Acts to the salaries of both. The Sanitary Inspector is an Associate of the Royal Sanitary Institute.

Professional Nursing.—The whole area comes within the provisions of the County Nursing Association—a voluntary organisation for providing district nursing and midwives in the district. The County authorities avail themselves of the services of these nurses and make a small contribution towards their support, but virtually the whole organisation is supported and maintained under the voluntary principle. The nurses act as health visitors under the direction of the County M.O.H.

Most of the old midwives have now ceased work and nearly all midwifery cases are attended to by these trained nurses. Some inaccessible portions of the district which are thinly populated are so far from a nurse that a neighbour acts in the capacity of midwife.

Arrangements are made by the County M.O.H. for the bacteriological examination of swabs and blood tests, etc.

Diphtheria Antitoxin is provided at Mr. Breeze, chemist, Newtown, and at both chemists in Llanidloes.

LIST OF ADOPTIVE ACTS.

List of Adoptive Acts, Bye-Laws and Regulations relating to the public health in force in the district, with date of adoption :—

Part 3 of Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1890; date of adoption, 28th August, 1912.

Bye-laws as to Cleansing of Footways and Removal of Refuse, etc.; 15th February, 1911.

Bye-laws as to Nuisances; 15th February, 1911.

Bye-laws as to Slaughterhouses; 22nd October, 1913.

Bye-laws as to New Buildings; 22nd October, 1913.

Regulations under Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Order, 12th June, 1907.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

Llanwnnog.

The water supply to this small village is obtained from a shallow well, which is built of brickwork, and is a fair supply.

Caersws.

The whole of this village obtains its supply of water from pump-wells about 12 feet deep. The pump-wells are situated in the yards at the back of the houses, and in many instances are only a few feet from the gardens where the occupiers of the houses have to bury the nightsoil from the

privies owing to their having no other means of disposal. The water supply to the village is very unsatisfactory, and has been reported upon to the Council from time to time.

Carno.

The supply of water to several of the houses in this village is very unsatisfactory. The water is obtained from an unprotected shallow well on the side of the brook and below the public road. The position of the well makes it at all times liable to pollution and it is impossible to protect it from contamination. The other houses obtain their water from pump-wells and a small gravitation supply and are fairly satisfactory.

Kerry.

The inhabitants obtain their water supply by gravitation. The supply comes from two reservoirs situated on the hill above the village and is piped into the yards of the houses and in some cases into the houses and is a good supply.

Llangurig.

The village obtains its water supply by gravitation, pump-well and a pistyll. The gravitation supply is a joint supply with the Education Authority and is obtained from a brick well situated on the north-west side of the village and carried down to the village in galvanised iron pipes. The other supplies appear fairly satisfactory and there is no shortage.

Llandinam.

A good supply of water is provided to this village by gravitation and a pump-well. The reservoirs and stone and brick-built storage tanks are situated on the hills on the south-west side of the village, and the water is piped into the houses which get their supply by gravitation by galvanised iron and lead pipes. The pump-well appears satisfactory.

Llawryglyn.

The majority of houses in this village obtain their water supply from a pistyll. A sample of this water was taken recently, and the analysis proved satisfactory.

Trefeglwys.

The water supply to this village consists of a gravitation supply and pump-wells. The gravitation supply was obtained by some of the owners of property coming to an arrangement with the Education Authority to connect with the main which supplies the School. The water is derived from the hill on the north side of the village and has a brick storage tank, and the water is carried down to the village in cast iron and galvanised iron pipes. The water in some instances is piped into the houses and in another case a standpipe is provided. The pump-wells appear to be satisfactory and there is no shortage of water in the village.

Bettws.

A good gravitation supply of water is provided to this village. The brick storage tank is situated on the west side of the village; the water is carried down to the village with cast iron and galvanised iron pipes and taken into the yards and in some cases taps are provided in the houses.

Tregynon.

The houses in this village obtain their water supply by gravitation, pump-wells and a shallow well. The gravitation supply is the same supply as is provided to the school and is the result of an arrangement come to many years ago by an owner of a large estate in this parish. The water is collected in brick tanks and carried to the houses by galvanised iron pipes. The pump-wells appear to be satisfactory. The shallow well is on the roadside and is built under the bank of a field—it is a brick and stone well. There is no shortage of water in the village.

Drainage and Sewerage.—The condition of disposal of sewage at Caersws is still in the same deplorable condition.

The small gardens at the back of the houses are invariably the places for emptying the pail closets and in many cases adjoining these gardens is the pump which supplies the need of the household. As these pumps are not in any case deep, the faecal material must of necessity percolate through from the gardens to these wells and pollution of the water is bound to occur. The first duty of the Council is to get a proper water supply for the village. I would further suggest that a scavenging scheme be adopted. If this were done, the pail closets and other domestic refuse could be removed weekly and satisfactorily disposed of.

With regard to Kerry, no doubt scavenging might be improved upon, but in face of the very numerous urgent problems in front of the Council, i.e., the Caersws problem—erection of new houses in Caersws, Carno, Bettws, Sarn, etc., and water supply to part of Carno—this matter may be deferred for the present.

Closet Accommodation.—As near as can be ascertained there are 2,215 Privies and 105 W.C.'s in the area. With regard to the Privies, the pail system is superseding the old pit system, and the majority of Privies have pails. In several farm houses the pits still exist.

SANITARY INSPECTION OF THE DISTRICT.

Report of the Sanitary Inspector for the year ending 31st December, 1925, under Article 19 of the Sanitary Officers' Order, 1922 :—

A.—The number and nature of inspections made by me during the year :—

1. Nuisances	...	...	...	...	242
2. Dairies and Cowsheds			...	...	68
3. Slaughterhouses	...	...	...	...	66
4. Factories and Workshops			...	...	44
5. Schools	...	...	...	...	110
6. Infectious Diseases	...	...	...	...	72
7. Under the Housing and Town Planning Act	...	...	...	...	156

B.—The number of notices served during the year, distinguishing Statutory from Informal Notices :—

1. *Informal Notices.*

	Served	Complied with	Reason for non-compliance
Drains and Cesspools	34	34	
Privies	25	25	
Paving of Yards ...	7	7	
Overcrowding ...	3	—	Tenants trying to obtain other accommodation
Cleansing of Ashpits	6	6	
Roofs and Walls ...	19	16	Work in hand
Eavestroughing and downpipes ...	10	8	Do.
Cleansing and Lime-washing of Cowsheds	8	8	
Do. Workshops ...	6	6	
Water Supplies ...	10	8	Do.
Other Nuisances ...	21	17	Do.
	—	—	
	149	135	

2. *Statutory Notices Served.*

Served, 1. Complied with, 1.

C.—The result of service of such Notices :—

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 1. Informal Notices complied with | ... | 135 |
| 2. Statutory Notices complied with | ... | 1 |

I beg to remain,

Yours faithfully,

ARTHUR S. BENBOW.

HOUSING.

There is a shortage of houses in Caersws (Llanwnog), Carno, Bettws, Sarn (Kerry), and Trefeglwys.

12 houses are being built in Caersws and two houses in Trefeglwys by the Council. Some houses are being built in Llandinam by private enterprise.

There is little overcrowding and as soon as these new houses are erected and occupied, the standard of housing in the area will probably be better than before.

The usual defects found to exist in unfit houses are :—(1) Defective light and ventilation, both of which are due to the houses having been built originally with their backs to earth. In several places the earth at the back is nearly up to the first floor; (2) absence of eaves troughing and badly constructed walls and roofs.

Notices are served on owners to carry out repairs and in many cases, particularly where the rents are very low, an arrangement is come to with the owner to carry out the repairs gradually.

Housing Statistics for 1925.

Number of new houses erected during the year :—

(a) Total	...	...	...	...	...	5
(b) With State assistance under the Housing Acts :—						
(i) By the Local Authority	...	...	...	...	...	Nil
(ii) By other bodies or persons	...	...	...	...	...	3

1. Unfit Dwelling Houses—Inspection.

(1) Total number of dwelling houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts)	...	...	...	...	117
(2) Number of dwelling houses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations, 1910, or the Housing Consolidated Regulations, 1925					85
(3) Number of dwelling houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	...	...	...	...	9
(4) Number of dwelling houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-heading) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation	...	...	...	...	47

2.	Remedy of defects without service of formal Notices.	
	Number of defective dwelling houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers	6
3.	Action under Statutory Powers.	
A.	Proceedings under Section 3 of the Housing Act, 1925	
(1)	Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Notices were served requiring repairs	Nil
B.	Proceedings under Public Health Acts.	
(1)	Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Notices were served requiring defects to be remedied	50
(2)	Number of dwelling houses in which defects were remedied	
(a)	By Owners	41
(b)	By Local Authority in default of Owners	Nil
C.	Proceedings under Sections 11, 14 and 15 of the Housing Act, 1925	Nil

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

Milk Supply.—All the milk vendors in the area were circularised in January last, drawing attention to the urgent need of cleanliness. Their attention was also drawn to the bye-laws and to the necessity of their observing them. The cowsheds are visited regularly and improvements are being gradually carried out.

The carrying out of the provisions of the Sale of Food and Drugs Acts and the Milk and Cream Regulation are undertaken under the control of the County Council.

Meat.—All the slaughterhouses in the area are regularly inspected and for the most part are kept in a very clean and satisfactory condition. These inspections are often made at the time of slaughter and no diseases in meat has been found. The administration of the Public Health (Meat) Regulations, 1924, is being carried out satisfactory. In 1920, five were licensed; January, 1925, six; December, 1925, eight.

PREVALENCE OF AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

As mentioned previously in this report, there was an epidemic of scarlet fever in the Llanwnnog district in the autumn of 1925. A few cases of Diphtheria occurred, but in every case there is prompt use made of Anti-toxin.

With regard to the examination of pathological and bacteriological specimens, the arrangement for these lies with the County Medical Officer of Health. In most cases in a rural area where the patients live long distances from their medical advisers, the latter have to make their diagnosis without these aids. Obviously where a doubtful case of diphtheria resides a long distance away, the only safe thing to do is to treat it as such without waiting for a bacteriological report.

I am not aware of any use being made of the Schick and Dick tests in Diphtheria and Scarlet Fever.

Schools.

Periodical inspections of School premises are carried out and undoubtedly the premises are being improved in nearly every instance.

Bakehouses.

These are under careful supervision and the standard of cleanliness and efficiency is well maintained.

In concluding, may I express my appreciation of the Council's interest and co-operation in the health of their district, and my sincere thanks to the Sanitary Inspector for his very valuable and efficient share in the year's work.

I remain,

Your Obedient Servant,

W. LL. DAVIES.

May, 1926.

